DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 382 829 CE 068 947

TITLE	Expanding Our Horizons. 1995 Success Stories.
INSTITUTION	Royce and Royce, Inc., Lancaster, PA.
SPONS AGENCY	Pennsylvania State Dept. of Education, Harrisburg. Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education.
PUB DATE	95
CONTRACT	98-5008
NOTE	28p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Clearinghouse AdvancE, Department of Education, 333 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; Adult Basic Education; Adult Literacy; *Adult Students; *Basic Skills; Biographies; Education Work Relationship; *Individual Characteristics; *Literacy Education; *Outcomes of Education; Program Descriptions; *Success; Vocational Rehabilitation
IDENTIFIERS	*Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

This booklet profiles 10 former participants in adult basic education (ABE) and literacy programs who have gone on to build successful lives and careers and have been designated outstanding adult students by the Pennsylvania Association for Adult and Continuing Education. The men and women selected as award winners were sponsored by the following Pennsylvania ABE, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs/agencies: Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council, Mid-State Literacy Council, Intermediate Unit 10 Development Center for Adults, Clarion County Literacy Council, Cumberland Valley School District, Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit, Luzerne Intermediate Unit 18, Tuscarora Intermediate Unit Adult Education and Job Training Center, Eagleville Hospital, the Lighthouse, and the Center for Literacy, Inc. Each profile includes information on the following: award winner's level of formal education before enrolling in an adult education program, the obstacles and/or personal/physical problems overcome by the individual, career progress and/or community activities since completing the adult education program, and continuing involvement (if any) with ABE or literacy education. (MN)

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1995 Success Stories

BUREAU OF ADULT BASIC AND LITERACY PROGRAMS

ACHIEVEMENT ABLE Achievement Award EXCELLENCE BASED ON LEARNING

Expanding Our Horizons

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HONORS OUTSTANDING ADULT STUDENTS IN SUCCESS STORIES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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1995
Expanding Our Horizons

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Dear Reader:

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is proud to share this publication, **SUCCESS STORIES: *Expanding Our Horizons.*** In this booklet, you will read about 10 outstanding men and women who exemplify the many Pennsylvania adults who seek to expand their futures through adult basic education and lifelong learning.

By participating in adult basic education and literacy programs, these adults increased their academic skills and changed their lives. Aided by adult education providers, these 10 individuals overcame what sometimes seemed insurmountable odds in order to reach their personal and educational goals. Their perseverance and determination serve as examples to all of us. More than ever, education is essential in enabling people to reach their full potential and become productive members of their families, workplaces and communities. It is vital that we support efforts to improve adult literacy in our state.

I hope that this publication will encourage you to promote educational achievement wherever you are, in whatever you do. As these stories show, it is up to each of us to become involved, so that we can assist our fellow citizens in "expanding their horizons." Together, we can make it work.

Sincerely,

Tom Ridge

Tom Ridge
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

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In my life, there was a series of doors that stood in my way because I couldn't read. With the help of the literacy council, my tutor, my family, and my church, these doors have opened.

Walter H. Long

Walter H. Long enrolled in Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council's (GLPC's) educational program in November 1988 to help his four children with their schoolwork. The children, then aged 14, 11, 8 and 5, would bring their library books to him for help or ask him to read a story. He was frustrated by his inability to help them. He said, "I felt like a hypocrite, telling them to use the library when I couldn't use it myself." Despite the fact that he had graduated from high school and held a responsible job with the Shaler Water Department for some years, testing showed that Walter had a second grade reading level when he entered the program. Walter and his volunteer tutor, M. E. Ruda, met regularly despite the demands of his family and his job, which required him to be on call and go to

the location of any water main break in the township, even if it was in the middle of the night.

Walter put in approximately 300 hours of class time and, by August 1992, had improved his skills to a twelfth grade level. Due to this progress, he was able to keep his job and perform it better. He passed two written tests required by his employer. The first tested his knowledge of the chemicals he works with at the plant; the second was a commercial truck driving exam with more than 100 questions.

Walter, who was chairman of his church's Christian Education Committee, was proud to give his first-ever reading during a church service in 1989. His newfound literacy skills also helped him to do a more effective job as the chairman of a volunteer fire company. In late 1989, he began volunteering as a promoter of literacy programs. He has appeared on a number of television and radio programs in the Pittsburgh area and has been interviewed for newspaper articles that appeared in the *North Hills News Record* and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. He also arranged for the donation of a copying machine when GPLC opened an outreach office in his neighborhood. He met as many students as he could to support them in their learning. As a result of this involvement, he became the first student to be named to the GPLC Board of Directors, and is now serving a second two-year term.

Walter began attending literacy conferences in 1990 to network with other students and promote literacy.

These travels, usually at his own expense, have taken him to St. Louis and Little Rock, and to state conferences in Harrisburg and Hershey. He has been a delegate to the last two National Adult Literacy Congresses in Washington, D.C. He also was selected by the Tutors of Literacy in the Commonwealth (TLC) as one of four regional student representatives for the state.

Walter plans to go to college and continue working in literacy programs, possibly as a staff member. He explained, "In my life, there was a series of doors that stood in my way because I couldn't read. With the help of the literacy council, my tutor, my family and my church, these doors have opened." In return for the gifts he has received, he has become a spokesman for literacy and a leader of other students.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY

Walter H. Long

Sponsor: *Donald Block*
The Greater Pittsburgh
Literacy Council

It's a new day —
I made it!

Daryl F. Solt

Daryl F. Solt wears a Medic Alert bracelet that identifies him as having amnesia. Four years ago, while working as a truck driver, he fell from a truck and sustained severe head injuries. Through two years of rehabilitation, Daryl relearned how to walk, to speak — all the functions we take for granted — but he could not recover his memory. At 50, all his friends and family were strangers to him, people he had to meet anew. Even his heritage as a Native American was lost to him. Remembering that time, Daryl said, "Not knowing the people closest to me was the hardest thing in the world... You can't imagine."

The accident that had taken so much gave him a new awareness of the world around him. He began to question why his own grandson could

find meaning in marks on a page, and he could not. Daryl asked his speech therapist to teach him to read. The therapist became his first tutor, and soon he was matched with another tutor through the Mid-State Literacy Council. Daryl explained, "We learned together. She taught me how to read, and I taught her how I needed to learn." Two-and-a-half years later, he was reading at a fifth grade level and had reclaimed many of his basic skills. But, he wanted more. "I want to be like you," he told his teachers. "I want to hold down a job. I don't want to live on insurance benefits."

In September 1993, Daryl was enrolled in Centre County Vocational-Technical School to relearn the trade he had practiced prior to driving a truck. "It's funny," he says of the experience. "I used to be a certified welder, then I walk into this shop class, and I don't even know what a welding rod is." Perhaps it's funny when looking back, but Daryl admits that he gets impatient because there's so much to learn. For additional help with basic skills, he turned to Central Intermediate Unit 10's Adult Development Center, which is housed in the same building as the vocational-technical school. Daryl remembered one of his early days in the program, "The teacher was going to help me with measurement, but I didn't know what she meant by a yardstick. Was it a stick used to measure a person's yard, or sticks that you pick up in a yard?"

That was only a year ago, but Daryl has come a long way since then. His math tutor attends some vocational classes with him to get a better insight into the kinds of math problems he'll need to solve on the job. Daryl continues his study into the evenings, meeting with his reading tutor on Tuesday nights. In fact, with a weekly schedule that at times has included sessions with as many as seven tutors, Daryl's life is a full one. Yet, he never misses the opportunity to learn something new. His most recent interest is word processing on the computer. He also has become an advocate of adult education programs, urging others with memory loss in his support group to seek help.

Life is anything but routine for Daryl — it's more of an adventure. He looked very seriously at his teacher and said, "I cannot go to sleep until after midnight." In answer to her questioning look, he explained, "It's a new day — I made it!"

CENTRE COUNTY

Daryl F. Solt

Sponsors: *Monica Kindig* and
Edith Gordon
Mid-State Literacy Council and
IU 10 Development Center
for Adults

"Without the grace of God, I never would have done it!"

Carmen Hernandez Duncan

Working at Clarion University for her bachelor's degree in Computer Information Science is a far cry from being an alcohol-addicted single mother. In April 1970, because of an unexpected pregnancy, Carmen left her Catholic high school during her junior year. Six months after the birth of her son, Daniel, Carmen separated from his father. Five years later she moved to Clarion to provide a more favorable environment for her son.

Carmen found it difficult to re-enter the realm of learning as an adult. She had to overcome both cultural and gender barriers in order to reach her goal of obtaining an education. She believed that a man is the sole provider and the means by which the woman gets what she needs out of life. This made her feel

inadequate to achieve anything on her own. Her feelings of low self-esteem led to depression and alcoholism. Through the process of overcoming her alcohol addiction, Carmen began to gain more self-assurance and self-reliance. She decided that she wanted the education she rightfully deserved.

In fall 1991, Carmen reluctantly entered a tutoring program sponsored by the Clarion County Literacy Council. Because her initial reading level was only fifth grade, she was afraid that she might not be able to do GED work. Furthermore, she feared failure because of previous unsuccessful GED testing. The literacy council provided tutoring that was adapted to her shift work schedule. As her tutoring progressed, she gained confidence. She became a workaholic in the pursuit of this goal. She began studying for her GED in fall 1992. One year later, after passing her GED test, she proudly entered Clarion University as a returning adult. Since enrolling, she has accumulated 18 credits while still being employed at Owens-Brockway. She has worked for this company for the past 18 years, and currently is a back-up crew leader in the select packing department. Lloyd Kudrick, her boss, stated that she is very conscientious, outstanding and eager to learn.

For the past two years, while attending college and working full time, Carmen has served on the Board of Directors for Clarion County's Drug and Alcohol Program. As a board member, she helps to make major decisions about hiring, fund raisers and procedures. She also is a member of the Health and Safety Committee at work. Promoting literacy has become a personal mission for her. She advocates continuing education at work, in committee meetings and during group sessions. In all aspects of her life, she is able to plant the seed of literacy in the minds of her colleagues, peers and associates. Carmen Hernandez Duncan wants to persuade other adults that it is not too late to begin to realize their dreams. She stated, "Without the grace of God, I never would have done it."

CLARION COUNTY

Carmen Hernandez Duncan

Sponsor: *Susan Hays*
Clarion County Literacy Council

"Don't quit!"

Helen Priest

Shortly after her first birthday, Helen Priest was improperly diagnosed as having cystic fibrosis. She was placed in a children's home, where she attended special education classes until she was released to a foster home at the age of 16. The foster home is the only family she has ever known. During her sophomore year, she became pregnant and left school. Because her husband was never there, she was left with the task of rearing her two daughters. In 1986, she enrolled in an educational program with the Susquehanna Employment and Training Council (SETCO), but was forced to withdraw because of health reasons.

Divorced and without a job, on welfare and in public housing, Helen faced the prospect of admitting one of her children to a rehabilitation

center, and working with a daughter who had been diagnosed as being hyperactive. In 1993, when she enrolled in a Family Education program at SETCO, her initial test scores showed an eighth grade level in reading and a third grade level in math. By August 1993, she had increased both scores and entered the Cumberland Valley School District's *High School Diploma Program for Adults*. Helen focused on her education while maintaining her responsibility to her family. When family pressures seemed overwhelming, she just kept going — she would not allow anything to impede her progress. She successfully completed all the requirements of the program and graduated in June 1994.

Upon graduation, she entered a Red Cross training program. After completing 100 hours of instruction, she passed the written and oral test and qualified as a Nurse's Aide. Her instructors recommended her for immediate employment in a nursing home. A CPR course that she took as part of her adult program allows her to perform duties that transcend her original job description.

Prior to taking part in adult education, Helen was extremely introverted. As one of the components of the adult program, she had to complete life-skills assignments in her home community. Because of this experience, she learned to confront her shyness in a constructive manner. She gained enough self-confidence to go to the Dauphin County Housing Authority and insist they visit her home. For nine years, she had lived in a residence that has now been condemned. She now lives in a new housing project, and describes her new home as the nicest in her life.

Helen has achieved success on many levels, including personal ones. Never knowing her natural parents, she was unsure of her actual birthdate. She recently discovered her birthdate, but was unable to locate her parents. All her children have learned the value of education. Her oldest daughter graduated from high school in June 1994. Her second daughter is a tenth grade student at Steelton-Highspire High School, and her youngest daughter is in kindergarten. Due to her encouragement, several close friends have enrolled in the *Adult Diploma Program*. Her next goal is to own her own home and to be removed from the welfare roles. With this in mind, Helen has started a savings program. She also is investigating further educational programs in nursing. There is no doubt that she will achieve her goals.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

Helen Priest

Sponsor: *Samuel Gruber*
Cumberland Valley
School District

Where there are wills, there are ways. The GED is the first stepping stone to your futures.

Marilyn G. Howard

Marilyn Howard was rethinking her decision to quit school when her ninth grade teacher announced to the class that Marilyn was dropping out. Believing it would be too difficult to face the other students if she chose to change her mind, she left high school. Neither of her parents had finished school, and there was no pressure from home to graduate. She started a course at Opportunities Industrialization Center, but became pregnant and did not finish. Twelve years later, Marilyn found herself on welfare with two young children. Her relationship with their father was going nowhere. She realized that it would be up to her to change her life if she was ever going to meet her goal — self-sufficiency for her family. In 1988, she enrolled in a GED class

conducted by the Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit.

With one son in kindergarten, Marilyn could only stay for part of the class period, but she took work home in order to keep up with the class. Then, just as she was planning to enroll in an associate degree program in radiology, she discovered she was pregnant. With encouragement from her instructor and counselor, she took the GED test. One week later, she enrolled in New Choices, a career exploration program. Refused admission to Gannon University, she entered their ACT 101 program, and completed it on the day her baby was due, receiving an outstanding student award. When the baby was one month old, she was accepted by Gannon as an undeclared student and, after a year of courses, as a matriculating student in the Radiology program. Marilyn earned a scholarship and graduated with a cumulative average of 3.35 in her major.

Three days after graduation, she took a part time job at an intermediate care facility. Offered a full time hospital job out of town, she tried commuting 149 miles each day. When the wear on her family became too great, she found a job at Metro Health Center in Erie, where she worked from noon to 8:30 p.m. With these hours, her oldest son had to take on the role of parent, and she saw the children only to send them to school or tuck them in bed. In June 1994, Marilyn was offered a first shift, full-time position at Metro. While the salary was less than some of the other jobs, she finally had her family back on track.

Currently registered as a Radiological Technologist, Marilyn is working for certification as a Mammography Technician. She attends work-related seminars and in-services; represents her hospital at civic functions; is certified in CPR through the American Cancer Society; and is trained to instruct women in breast exams through the American Cancer Society. She visits and talks to adult education classes regularly, and was the 1994 Keynote Speaker at her adult education program. Marilyn told the graduates and their families to expect many walls to appear on their goal paths, but the important issue is to persist. She concluded her remarks, "Where there are wills; there are ways. The GED is the first stepping stone to your futures."

ERIE COUNTY

Marilyn G. Howard

Sponsor: *Barbara Krob*
Northwest Tri-County
Intermediate Unit

Liberated, Inspirated, Motivated and Educated!

Michelle Nichole Yantz

Michelle Nichole Yantz was a gifted and talented child who learned to read at the age of three. Up until the fifth grade, she placed high on the honors list. Her problems began in sixth grade when her family moved to a new town, and constant family bickering led to an ugly divorce. In high school, she skipped classes and became involved with drugs and alcohol. In the eleventh grade, she was thrown out of the family home. Her frequent absences resulted in her expulsion from two high schools, and she was forced to seek employment to survive. A life-long passion for animals led her to a local veterinary hospital. She remained in the veterinary profession for seven years, advancing from assistant to head technician, to manager of one facility.

This success in the work place did not mirror her tumultuous personal life. Thin smiles and nervous laughter masked a long-term, abusive relationship. She mustered the strength to overcome this obstacle, and, at the age of 24, set forth on her own. Michelle soon moved to Pennsylvania with her future husband. Shortly after their marriage, he became distant, quit his job and refused to contribute to the family income. She sought employment at various veterinary hospitals, but was offered only menial jobs at minimum wages. She took a position tending bar at a local night club and held this job for three years, despite low pay, long hours and constant harassment. Pregnant and alone, she continued working until one week prior to the birth of her daughter, Sierra Rose. As the sole breadwinner, she was forced to return to work when the baby was only six weeks old.

In April 1994, determined to improve their lives, Michelle entered the adult literacy program sponsored by Luzerne Intermediate Unit 18 and the Luzerne County Human Resources Development Department. Her initial tests showed grade levels well above 12.9 in reading and writing, and 12.5 in mathematics. Instead of immediately taking the GED test, Michelle opted to attend class. She felt she could do better, and especially wanted to improve her math skills. She came faithfully every day for two weeks and took home books and other material to look over when she was not at work. When the time came to take the GED test, she had perfect scores in both math and science. Her total test score was 356, the highest recorded by a student in the program's 11-year history! Michelle was granted acceptance on a provisionary level at the Pennsylania State University. Now enrolled, she has completed her first semester with a 4.0 average. Her goal is to obtain a bachelor's degree in biology and then enter graduate school in the field of zoology, particularly focusing on genetics.

Michelle has been an active member of the La Leche League since her daughter was two weeks old. She recently was voted president of the Non-Traditional Student Society, is a staff member of the school newspaper and has led a campaign promoting a day care facility on campus. She currently serves as an English tutor at Penn State and as a math tutor in the adult literacy program. Posted on her refrigerator, a hand-written sign sums up Michelle in three words: **Liberated, Inspirated and Motivated.** Now, she said, she would like to be able to add one more: ***Educated!***

LUZERNE COUNTY

Michelle Nichole Yantz

Sponsors: *Frank J. Nardone and*
Frank Wascalis
Luzerne Intermediate Unit 18

Getting my GED gave me the self-confidence to realize I had a future.

Sandy Bender

Sandy Bender never believed education was important — especially hers. After all, Sandy grew up in a family that placed absolutely no importance on education. Convinced that dropping out of school was the normal thing to do, she left in the tenth grade. Like many high school dropouts, she managed to *get by,* but she always had the thought in the back of her mind: "What would it be like to graduate from high school and go on to college?"

Her motivation to get her GED came when she began volunteering at Head Start. Wanting to be a good role model for her three children, she decided it was time to place a real priority on education. Terrified to take the first step, she nevertheless enrolled in TIU Adult Education and Job Training

Center's GED classes. While working on her GED, Sandy's math instructor discovered that she did not know how to carry. This problem had gone undetected during all her years in public school. After she learned how to carry, she was able to move beyond basic math, and even enjoy it!

After receiving her GED in June 1993, Sandy moved on to New Choices, a vocational education program that helped her to focus her direction for both her life and her career. She began to give some serious thought to a future in radiology, and attended brush-up adult basic education classes for science and math in order to prepare herself for college. She also came to independent study sessions to work on her math. To further increase her math skills and gain computer skills and experience, she then enrolled in pre-vocational clerical classes. The more classes she took and the more she did, the more confident she became. She began to seriously explore colleges.

In June 1994, Sandy started taking classes at Harrisburg Area Community College. After completing a pre-algebra course with a B average, she enrolled as a full time student in a three-year degree program in radiology. During the first two years, she will complete all of the prerequisite courses. During the third year, she will do her clinical work. Currently, there are 150 students enrolled in the radiology program. Only 24 of those 150 will be selected to go on to the clinical part of the degree program. Sandy said, "I will be one of the 24!" Her far-reaching goal includes nuclear medicine. When her children are older, she plans to take courses at night while working days as a radiologist.

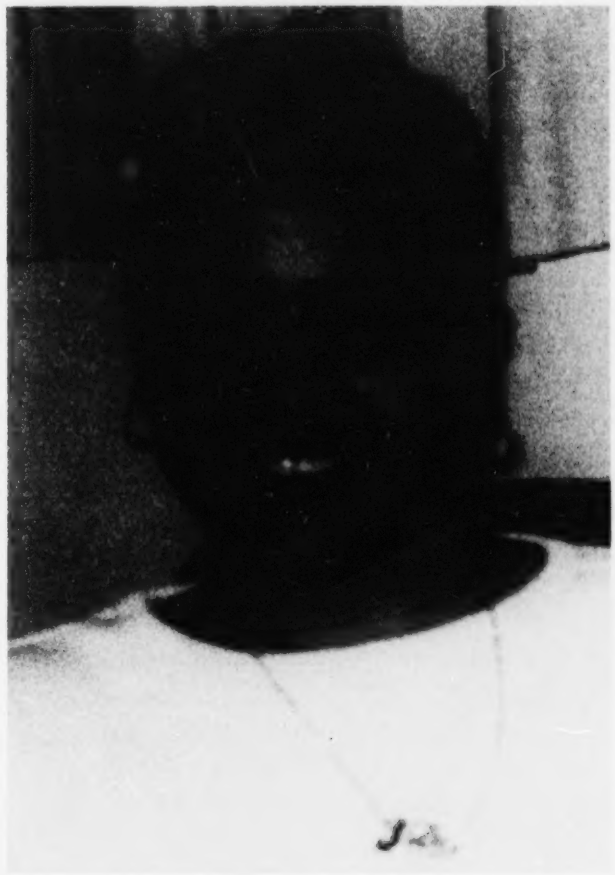
In addition to attending college as a full-time student, she currently is a member of Mifflin County's Goal Team 5. She also is an on-call tutor at the TIU center. Prior to starting college, Sandy was active in Head Start as a member of the policy committee and had volunteered for the March of Dimes. Despite her busy life, she is always willing to help others attain their personal goals. For the girl who dropped out of school because she thought an education was not important, Sandy has come a long way!

MIFFLIN COUNTY

Sandy Bender

Sponsor: *Barbara Goss*
Tuscarora Intermediate Unit
Adult Education and
Job Training Center

It's not where you come from, it's where you are going!



Julissa Rivera

"I didn't realize I had all these good things to look forward to," said Julissa, showing off a tassel with a small disk and the year 1993 inscribed on it — the year she received her GED; her passport to college. Julissa was the daughter of an alcoholic father who left his family when she was two. She maintained contact with him and, from the ages of five to seven, was forced to endure what no small child should. This experience caused her to lose her sense of self-worth. In school, she struggled to achieve but could not master the rudiments of math. Surrounded by a drug-infested environment, she was eventually immersed in it. At the age of 14, she was pregnant and married to another addict. By 15, her formal education ended in seventh grade.

Her marriage did not last, but her pattern of destruction did. By 1989, Julissa assessed her life, and decided to set goals for herself. She had two children; no home; no job; and, in her own words, not a single strength. Entering Eagleville Hospital, she struggled with all aspects of treatment. The one constant was her involvement in the adult education program She wanted her GED, and recognized that she had to overcome her fear of failure to achieve that goal. Initially tested at an eighth grade reading level, she exhibited a limited vocabulary and struggled with her old nemesis, math. Although she persisted and achieved in her studies, behaviors got in the way, and she was discharged for treatment resistance.

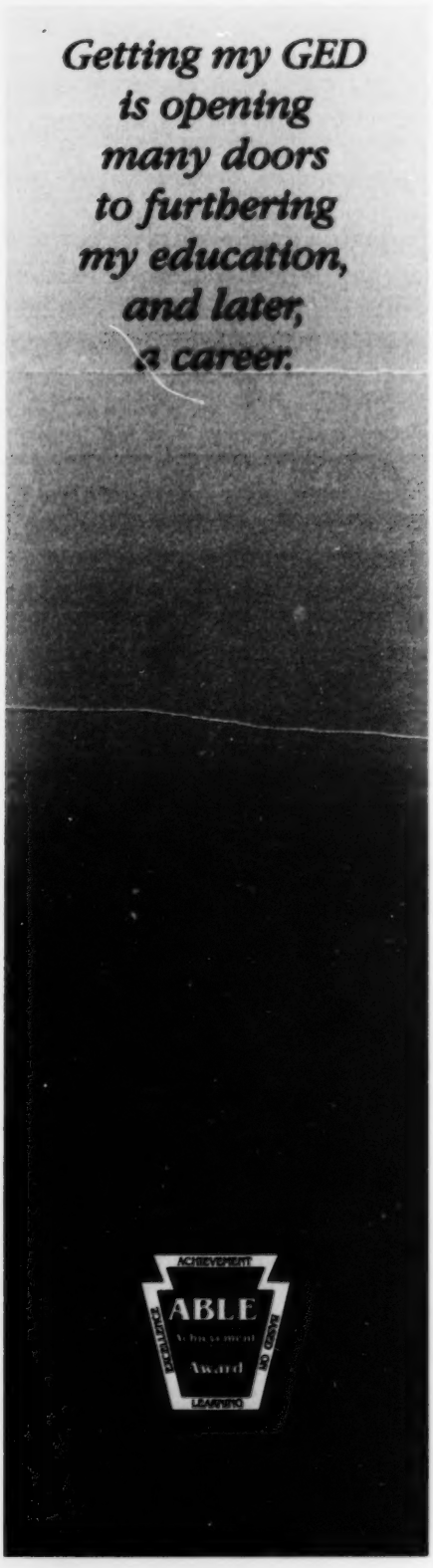
When Julissa reentered treatment a year later, she had lost everything — her home; her three children; her possessions; and what little self-respect remained. She worked on her academic skills and, this time, when she left treatment for resistance, Julissa followed the positive aftercare plans set up for her. She moved into a recovery house and took a job in a fast food restaurant. She regained custody of her three children and continued her studies. When her first attempt at passing the GED was not successful, she returned to class. She had to pass because she was registered to start college the following month to pursue a nursing degree.

Today, Julissa has her GED diploma and has completed a semester of college. More importantly, she has three years of sobriety and is a responsible mother providing a stable environment for her three children. She has stopped her pattern of resistance and has become someone to be admired and respected. As an active member of Narcotics Anonymous (NA), she sponsors women in recovery. Julissa herself has found the strength to overcome not only her background but her resistance to change. She now helps others to find out who they are, and how to be their own person. She inspires them to overcome fear of failure, discover education and realize their goals. She encourages them to discover all the good things they can look forward to.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Julissa Rivera

Sponsor: *Kathleen Marks*
Eagleville Hospital



Christine Castro

Despite having dropped out of high school in 1984 after completing the eleventh grade, Christine Castro performed well on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), and was admitted to a GED class sponsored by The Lighthouse. During the course of a 16-week semester beginning in the fall of 1993, she distinguished herself as a dedicated student and class leader. Upon completion of the course, she passed the GED with a total of 267 points.

Christine decided from the outset that she was going to reclaim responsibility for her own education. She did not come to receive an education or learn test-taking shortcuts, but rather to actively engage herself in the process of education. She lobbied for a math lab and recruited other students

to join in special math tutorial sessions. She represented her class on the Student Activities Committee, and won the contest for designing a new adult education program logo. Her enthusiasm, self-respect and concern for others left an impression on her fellow students, her instructors and program administrators.

She returned to The Lighthouse for the spring 1994 semester as a volunteer tutor in the math lab. Her efforts were duly recognized at 1994 GED graduation ceremonies. With her four young daughters in attendance, she received a plaque for achieving the highest GED score among English GED students. She also was awarded the first annual Angel Ortiz-Soto Memorial Scholarship, which entitled her to $500 for tuition for her first semester at college. Since graduation, Christine has taken a placement test at the Community College of Philadelphia and has met with an adviser to plan her course of study. In January 1995, she enrolled as a part-time student pursuing a degree in nursing.

Christine also has distinguished herself as an advocate of children's education within the School District of Philadelphia. She helped to organize a *Weed and Seed* project to guarantee safe passage to and from school for children enrolled at Hartranft Public School. She participated in a grant-writing project requesting computer resources for the library and opened a school supplies store for children. She volunteers five to ten hours a week as a reading assistant, chaperones school trips and participates in Home and School Association meetings.

As a community activist in her low-income Hispanic neighborhood, she and the block captain on her street hold monthly meetings with their neighbors to discuss the city services they need. She was responsible for converting a two-house empty lot adjacent to her home into a model gardening project. After cleaning the debris and garbage-strewn lot herself, she secured fencing, soil, mulch and shrubbery from the community.

Christine has since planted a flowering magnolia, a cherry blossom tree, mums, coreopsis and a strawberry patch. She also has landscaped the lot with footpaths and a centrally located wagon wheel with spokes that separate wedges of different colored flowers. Christine is so excited about her gardening project that she eagerly invites school groups to visit for horticultural lessons.

PHILADELPHIA COUNTY
Christine Castro
Sponsor: *Robert Carr*
The Lighthouse

I'm grateful to God, to the Center for Literacy, and to my teacher and mentor, Jane McGovern, who challenged me to take responsibility for my learning

Romona Speakes

Although she had completed tenth grade, Romona Speakes tested at a 5th-to-8th grade level when she entered the Center for Literacy's (CFL's) program in November 1992. Two years later, in July 1994, she attained her GED. Self-discipline and goal setting were two of the hardest, but most critical skills Romona learned. Unaccustomed to self-discipline, she developed an innovative approach to overcome this barrier to learning. Lacking an authority figure in her life, she created her own by talking to herself like a mother. By using this tool, as well as "looking at the facts instead of the feeling," she became self-motivated and determined. Through her work with Jane McGovern, her instructor and role model, she learned special strategies for setting goals, most notably, writing them down on paper.

In August 1994, based on her outstanding leadership qualities, she was hired as a CFL Student Coordinator to provide support to other students in the program. In addition to this 10 hour a week job, she works 30 hours a week as a Teacher's Aide at Top/Win, a nontraditional woman's program. She also is enrolled in the Bible Institute, where she is gaining credits toward becoming a certified counselor. Romona plans to enter Temple University to obtain a degree in teaching or social work. Beyond her paid work, she is the founder of Streams in the Desert, a residential program for women who are recovering from drug addiction. She started the program in November 1991, after she met a woman at church who was in recovery, and needed a place to stay. Just six months into her own recovery, Romona took her in. Soon she was taking in more women. At one time, she had eight women living in her home, pooling their money and supporting each other. Romona learned to set rules while providing essential support.

In addition to supporting strangers, Romona has single-handedly raised two sons. Her oldest lives in Seattle with his wife and two sons. While their relationship has had its ups and downs, she is very close with him now. Her youngest, in his mid-teens, is currently missing. She recognizes that her former drug addiction is most likely a factor. While she is now ready to be a fully participating parent, she knows that there are consequences to her past behavior that are only now surfacing.

Romona has been a promoter, supporter and inspiration of the highest order. After 22 years as a drug addict, which began with cigarettes and beer and escalated to crack cocaine, she made up her mind to get off drugs, obtain her GED and get off welfare. Simply accomplishing one of these goals would have been remarkable. Romona achieved all three. In the last year alone, she has obtained her GED, gained employment, and has been selected unanimously by the Center for Literacy to be emcee for their annual recognition event. She exudes a positive attitude and genuine concern for others that adds to the already remarkable qualities she possesses.

Romona Speakes
Sponsors: *Jane McGovern* and
JoAnn Weinberger
The Center for Literacy, Inc.

1995 OUTSTANDING ADULT STUDENTS

Front row (left to right): Julissa Rivera, Helen Priest, Romona Speakes, Michelle Nichole Yantz, Carmen Hernandez Duncan.
Back row (left to right): Walter H. Long, Marilyn Howard, Sandy Bender, and Daryl Solt.
Christine Castro is missing from the picture.

PAACE

These students were honored at Pennsylvania's 1995 Midwinter Conference which was co-sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. and The Pennsylvania Association for Adult and Continuing Education (PAACE). PAACE's membership includes teachers, tutors, counselors, professors, administrators, librarians, students and volunteers who work with adult learners in institutions of basic and higher education businesses and community agencies. In addition to the annual Midwinter Conference, PAACE, sponsors special interest sections, publishes a newsletter, journal and membership directory. It is affiliated with the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE).

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SUCCESS STORIES: Expanding our Horizons

#98-5008 FY 1994-95

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1938 Crooked Oak Drive
Lancaster, PA 17601

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